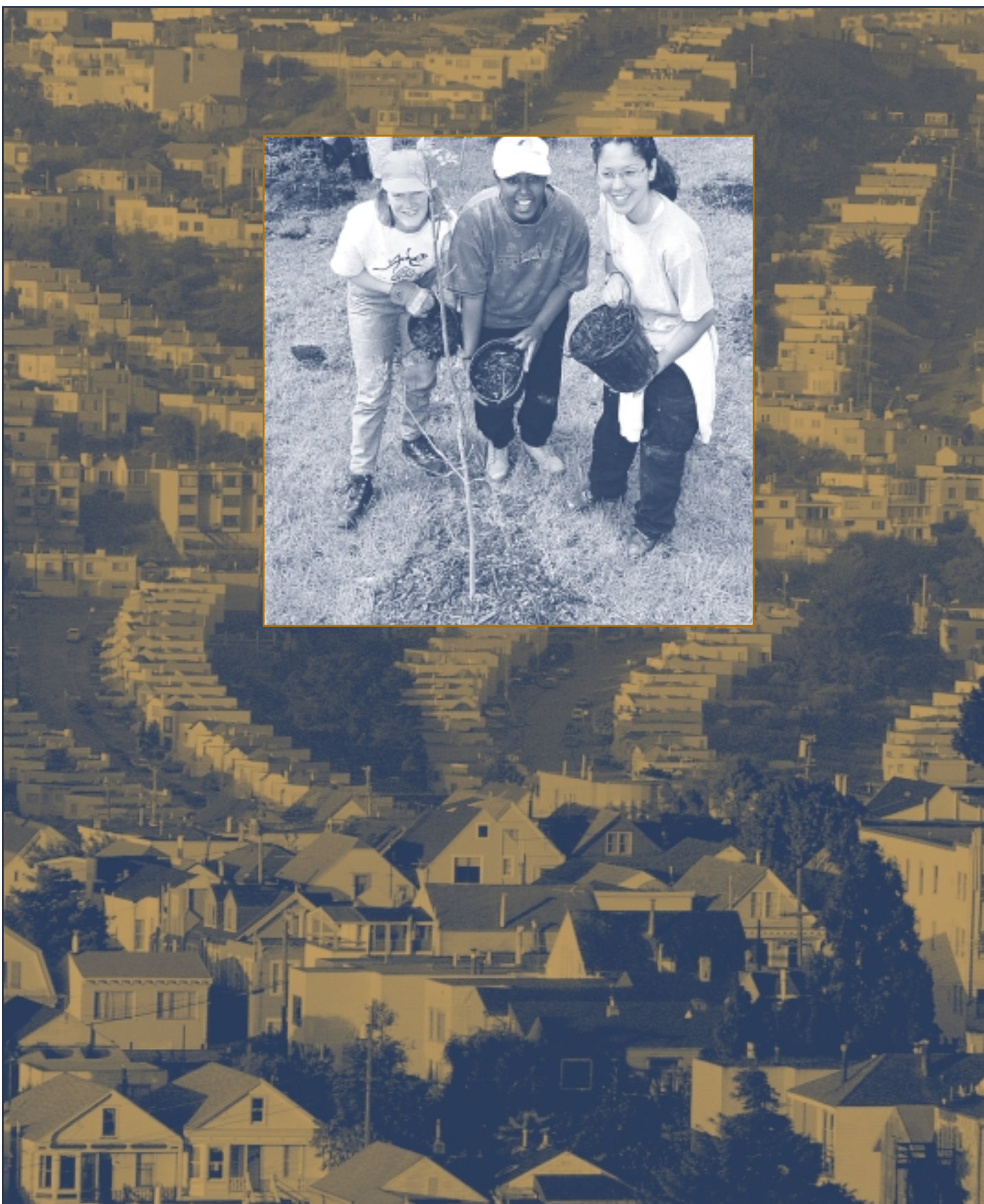


30 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS



Public water suppliers must tell customers what's in their water • Home buyers/renters must be told of lead-in Hoboken, NJ residences 1997 • Historic agreement protecting New York City water supply signed • Mud Dump

CHALLENGES

“The human race is challenged more than ever before to demonstrate our mastery, not over nature, but of ourselves.”

—Rachel Carson

The challenge, simply put, is how to maintain and improve our quality of life. No, not the 70's meaning - newer car, bigger house, more gadgets - but rather the evolving concept that balances material growth with the need for clean air, clean water, open space and a safe and healthy environment.

The false notion that we must choose between a safe environment and a strong economy has been put behind us. Since 1970, we have significantly cut air pollution, water pollution and the generation of hazardous waste, yet the economy has grown 140 percent in those same 30 years. The public now has environmental expectations that seemed beyond reach just a few short years ago. Many industries, sensitive to public opinion and aware of the economic benefits, have adopted a new ethic, embracing conservation and taking responsibility for the wastes they create.

And so we face the next generation of environmental challenges. The issues are both local and global. Population growth and urban sprawl threaten gains made in regional air quality, put both the quality and quantity of drinking water at

risk and are seriously depleting open space.

The impact of sprawl on open space is a shared concern. Open space is more than woods to walk in or a pretty view. Development brings hard surfaces - roofs, roads and parking lots. The rain that should be replenishing underground sources of drinking water is directed instead into storm sewers and carried away. And as population spreads out, so does the pollution it generates. Polluted runoff contaminates rivers and streams that provide surface sources of drinking water.

The issue came to a head recently with a developer's plans to build a new city of 35,000 people in Sterling Forest, which straddles the New York-New Jersey border. The forest contains the

headwaters for two reservoirs providing drinking water for two million North Jersey residents. A public/private partnership was ultimately able to purchase nearly 16,000 acres, ending threats to New Jersey's water supply and resulting in the creation of a vast new park - with critical habitat - within an hour of New York City.

Mention loss of habitat and biodiversity, and most people think of the destruction of the rainforest.

Photo Credit: Environment Canada



Piping plover: endangered by habitat loss

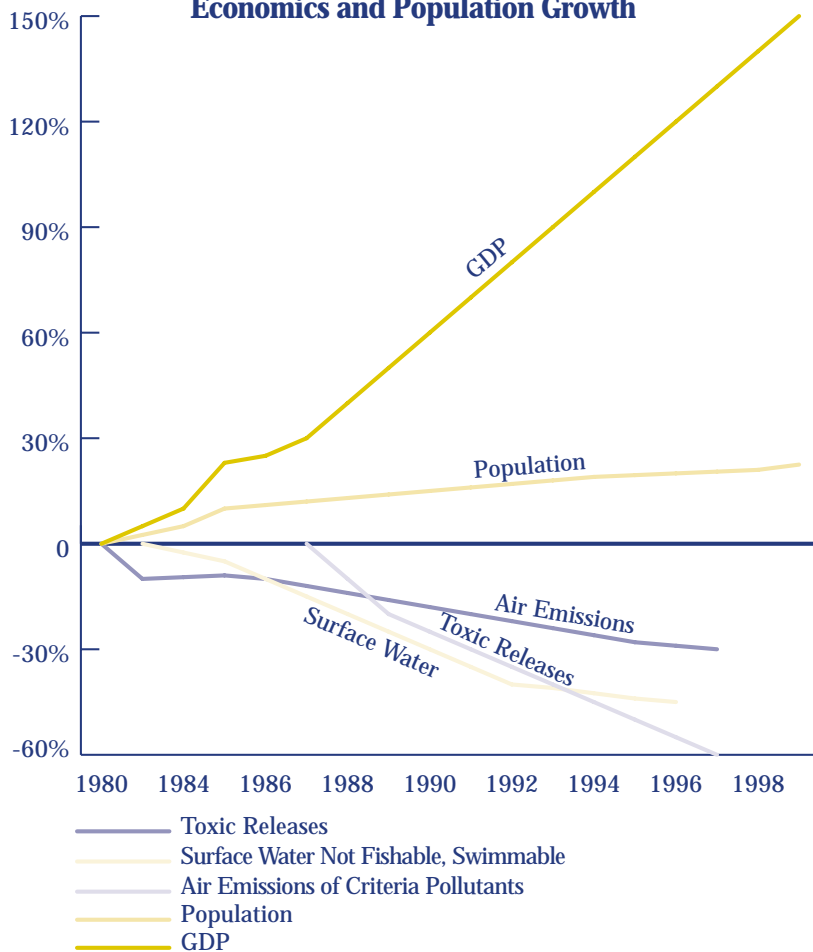
30 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS

The problem is rapacious; on average, an acre of rainforest is cut or burned every second and thousands of species are disappearing, many without ever having been "discovered." But loss of habitat is by no means limited to the rainforest. Urban sprawl is overrunning our regional habitat, and a less obvious issue is the fragmentation of what remains. Wildlife needs space to roam, breed and forage; small scattered subdivisions, even single houses, carve the land into parcels too small to support certain species.

Preserving biodiversity starts at home. The Region is home to 96 endangered plants and animals, including numerous birds - from the peregrine falcon to the brown pelican, reptiles, five sea-turtle species, the West Indian manatee and even a bat and a beetle. Some 60 percent of our endangered species are plants. The importance of EPA's wetlands program is underscored by the fact that habitat loss is a key factor in the endangered status of many of these species.

As environmental challenges move from the obvious - pollution that can be seen, smelled, touched and tasted - to the invisible - microbes in drinking water and microscopic particles in the air - decision-making depends increasingly on sound science. Public confidence and understanding are essential. People must be able to connect environmental benefits to the cost of protection. EPA's mandate is to base decisions on "the best available scientific information communicated clearly to the public."

**National Environmental Improvements,
Economics and Population Growth**



The Region has identified clean air, clean water, waste management and pollution and risk prevention as four priority areas of concern to be addressed over the next five years. A strategic planning process is preparing the Region to be able to allocate limited resources where the need is greatest.

People have an amazing capacity to embrace change - even make sacrifices - if they believe in the benefits to be gained. There is no better example than the environmental progress we have made in the past three decades. There are more changes - and more sacrifices - to be made ahead. Our success in making them will depend in large part on our ability to communicate the benefits of acting - and the risks of doing nothing.

**Heritage Rivers • Clean Water Action Plan has goal of fishable & swimmable waters for all Americans
1999 • Second hottest year ever in US • Work completed at Love Canal • Half of all Superfund cleanups are now completed 2000**